

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

Claim 1 (currently amended): A tailgate step, comprising:

~~at least a first hinge, the first hinge affixed within a vehicle tailgate;~~

at least a first support member, the first support member having a first end and a second end, ~~the first end pivotally attached to the first hinge; and~~ the second end of the first support member comprising a first portion of a first hinge;

at least a first step member, the first step member attached to the first end of the first support member;

at least a first support member storage channel, the first support member storage channel having a first end and a second end, at least a portion of the first support member storage channel disposed within the tailgate and operable to contain at least a portion of the first support member, the second end of the first support member channel proximate to an edge of the tailgate and comprising a second portion of the first hinge, the second portion of the first hinge including a first contact surface, the first and second portions of the first hinge pivotally engaged by a first hinge pin; and

a first step member storage channel, the first step member storage channel communicating with the first end of the first support member storage channel, at least a

portion of the first step member storage channel disposed within the tailgate and operable to contain at least a portion of the first step member, the first support member and the first step member pivoting about the first hinge between a working position and a stored position, the first support member contacting the first contact surface when the first support member and the first step member are in the working position, the first step member positioned between the tailgate and ground level when in the working position, at least a portion of the first step member disposed within the first step member channel when the first step member is in the stored position, at least a portion of the first support member disposed within the first support member channel when first support member is in the stored position.

Claim 2 (cancelled)

Claim 3 (cancelled)

Claim 4 (cancelled)

Claim 5 (cancelled)

Claim 6 (currently amended): A tailgate step as claimed in claim 1, further comprising:

~~a second hinge and a second support member, the second hinge affixed within the vehicle tailgate, the second support member having a first end and a second end, the first end of the second support member pivotally attached to the second hinge, the second end of the second support member comprising a first portion of a second hinge, the first step member attached to the second support member;~~

a second support member storage channel, the second support member storage channel having a first end and a second end, at least a portion of the second support

member storage channel disposed within the tailgate and operable to contain at least a portion of the second support member, the first step member storage channel communicating with the first end of the second support member storage channel, the second end of the second support member channel proximate to an edge of the tailgate and comprising a second portion of the second hinge, the second portion of the second hinge including a second contact surface, the first and second portions of the second hinge pivotally engaged by a second hinge pin; and

the second support member and the first step member pivoting about the second hinge between a working position and a stored position, the second support member contacting the second contact surface when the second support member and the first step member are in the working position, the first step member positioned between the tailgate and ground level when in the working position, at least a portion of the second support member disposed within the second support member channel when second support member is in the stored position.

Claim 7 (cancelled)

Claim 7 8 (cancelled)

Claim 8 9 (currently amended): A tailgate step, comprising:

means for supporting a mass at a vertical position between a vehicle tailgate and ground level;

means for pivoting the means for supporting a mass between a working position and a stored position, at least a portion of the means for pivoting affixed within the vehicle tailgate; and

means for storing at least a portion of the means for supporting a mass within the vehicle tailgate.

Claim 10 (new): A tailgate step as claimed in claim 1, wherein the first step member is rigidly affixed to the first support member.

Claim 11 (new): A tailgate step as claimed in claim 1, wherein the first support member channel and the first step member channel comprise square metal "U" channels.

Claim 12 (new): A tailgate step as claimed in claim 1, wherein the first contact surface is rectangular and parallel to the first support member in the working position.

Claim 13 (new): A tailgate step as claimed in claim 6, wherein the second support member channel comprises a square metal "U" channel.

Claim 14 (new): A tailgate step as claimed in claim 6, wherein the second contact surface is rectangular and parallel to the second support member in the working position.

Claim 15 (new): A tailgate step as claimed in claim 1, wherein protective material is affixed to upper surfaces of the first support member and the first step member, the first support member being contained within the first support member channel while in the stored position, the first step member being contained within the first step member channel while in the stored position, the protective material being substantially flush with a tailgate surface when the first support member and the first step member are in the stored position.

Claim 16 (new): A tailgate step as claimed in claim 6, wherein protective material is affixed to upper surfaces of the second support member, the second support member being contained within the second support member channel while in the stored position,

Application No. 10/650,853  
Amendment dated 19 April 2004  
Reply to Office action of 29 January 2004

the protective material being substantially flush with a tailgate surface when the second support member is in the stored position.